

Message Text

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DRAFTED BY EUR/WE:REBARBOUR:JKB

APPROVED BY EUR - MR. LOWENSTEIN

D - MR. DUEMLING

C - HSONNENFELDT

S/S - MR. ORTIZ

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S E C R E T STATE 063364

E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS: PFOR, POR, IT

SUBJECT: PORTUGUESE POLITICAL SITUATION

1. ADOLFO BATTAGLIA, UNDER SECRETARY, ITALIAN MFA, MET WITH ACTING SECRETARY AND COUNSELOR DURING BATTAGLIA'S MARCH 18 WASHINGTON VISIT. REPLYING TO THE ACTING SECRETARY'S QUESTION ON PORTUGAL, BATTAGLIA CONSIDERED SITUATION VERY BAD. HE SAW PARALLEL WITH EVENTS IN CHILE. HE AGREED WITH THE ACTING SECRETARY THAT LAST WEEK'S UNSUCCESSFUL COUP ATTEMPT WAS A TRAGEDY IN ITS INOPPORTUNENESS AND ITS EFFECT ON THE MODERATE PARTIES.

2. THE ACTING SECRETARY SAID HE HOPED ITALY AND OTHER NATO MEMBERS MIGHT BE ABLE TO CONTRIBUTE TO IMPROVING THE PORTUGUESE SITUATION. THE MODERATE AND LEFT-OF-CENTER GROUPS WERE NOW BEING DISCREDITED AS A RESULT OF LAST SECRET

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WEEK'S ABORTIVE COUP, AND NO ONE KNEW HOW LONG SOARES

MIGHT BE THERE. THE U.S. WAS IMPLEMENTING A MODEST AID PROGRAM TO TRY TO INFLUENCE THE SITUATION BY IMPROVING THE ECONOMY. IT WOULD BE GOOD IF OTHER COUNTRIES ALSO TRIED TO HELP IN THIS WAY. BATTAGLIA SAID SOAMES HAD REPORTED TO THE EC COUNCIL AFTER HIS RECENT VISIT THERE AND HAD WARNED AGAINST ANY INTERFERENCE.

3. THE COUNSELOR POINTED OUT THAT IF THE SITUATION MOVED FARTHER LEFT, TOWARDS EXTREMISM, AND IF THE PORTUGUESE

COMMUNIST PARTY ACQUIRED POWER OR CONTROL OVER THE GOVERNMENT THIS IN ITSELF WOULD POSE A PROBLEM FOR NATO, APART FROM WHETHER PORTUGAL MIGHT TAKE THE INITIATIVE TO GET OUT. SONNENFELDT THOUGHT ALL NATO GOVERNMENTS SHOULD SERIOUSLY CONSIDER WHETHER ANY ONE OF THEM COULD INFLUENCE THE TREND OF EVENTS IN PORTUGAL IN A LESS NEGATIVE WAY.

4. BATTAGLIA SAID THAT THE GREATEST POLITICAL UTILITY MIGHT BE A COLLECTIVE MOVE BY THE EC RATHER THAN INDIVIDUAL ACTIONS. BUT "EUROPE" WAS STILL A MYTH, SO HE WOULD EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITY. PORTUGAL WAS NOT AN EC ASSOCIATE BUT HAD BEEN LOOKING FOR SOME ARRANGEMENT WITH THE COMMUNITY. THAT WAS WHY SOAMES WENT THERE. INGERSOLL

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